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Georgia Southern University Honors Student Stephen Crooke Selected for National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship

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Georgia Southern University Honors Program senior chemistry major Stephen Crooke of Claxton, Ga. has won the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship.

With this fellowship, Crooke will receive significant monetary support to fund three full years of study pursuing a research-based doctoral degree at an accredited US institution. This prestigious award is given in recognition of his outstanding academic and research accomplishments as an undergraduate at Georgia Southern University. Crooke is a Paulson Scholar, and his research focuses on developing a more efficient and cost effective way of creating certain chemical compounds in synthetic sponges that have the same properties as sea sponges. His research will be used in the fight against cancer.

"Over the past four years, I was able to synthetically develop five separate compounds. Our group is in the process of screening these compounds for antibacterial activity, and in the near future, we will be sending them to the National Cancer Institute for screening against cancer cells," Crooke explains.

"Research of this nature is critical to the medical community due to the need for an effective treatment for cancer, and it also has important implications in the field of synthetic chemistry because of the new methodology introduced for the potential development of other therapeutic compound."

In his research Crooke works closely with both Dr. Christine Whitlock and Dr. Michele McGibony. During the course of his research, Crooke has spent a significant amount of time creating biologically-active compounds in Whitlock's lab and testing the compounds in the lab with McGibony.

McGibony encourages her students to participate in research experiences as undergraduates, "I was fortunate that Stephen chose me and my collaborator, Dr. Christine Whitlock, as his research mentors. Stephen is one of the most hardworking students I have ever met in my fourteen years of higher education," said McGibony.

"Often scientific experiments do not work out properly the first time you set them up, Stephen will keep making alterations to the experiment until he gets a result. He is interested in understanding everything he can about chemistry and biochemistry," McGibony explained.

The Georgia Southern senior intends to earn his Ph.D. in biochemistry upon graduation.

Crooke says that his participation in the Honors program was a major influence on his undergraduate career at Georgia Southern.

"The Honors Program's encouragement of undergraduate research led me to become involved with my research early in my academic career, and I am thankful for that. Collaboration with my professors and the Honors Program allowed me to accomplish much during my time at Georgia Southern, primarily culminating in this award," Crook said. "I cannot thank the Honors Program and my advisers enough for all of the mentoring and guidance that they have provided me over the years."

The University Honors Program at Georgia Southern University provides a small college atmosphere in the context of a large comprehensive university. The program is designed to foster the development of a critical sense of inquiry, a spirit of creativity, a global perspective and an ethic of civic responsibility. The program also advises students from across the University in their pursuit of national and international competitive scholarships.

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Congratulations to #GeorgiaSouthern @GSCOSM alumnus Nick Wiley ('83) who was recently named the chief conservation officer of @DucksUnlimited ! ow.ly/BhVW30hkDJR



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